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SUBJECT: CHANGING THE FRAME: HOW WE TALK ABOUT THE CYPRUS
ISSUE

REF: SECSTATE 179318

Classified By: CDA Jane Zimmerman; Reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Since the referenda on the Annan Plan in April 2004, our rhetorical position on the Cyprus issue has been clear and consistent. We support the UN SYG and his Mission of Good Offices. We believe the Annan Plan represented a fair and viable settlement. And, we want the Greek Cypriot side -- as the rejecting party -- to articulate its concerns "with clarity and finality" so that the SYG might assess whether conditions warrant launching a new effort to resolve the Cyprus dispute. While consistency is a virtue, this message has been twisted by the Greek Cypriot leadership and in the Greek Cypriot media to the point that it is doing damage to our interests. We should look to re-frame the way in which we talk about the Cyprus issue in our public statements to limit the ability of the GOC and the Greek language press to make mischief. Post recommends that we limit ourselves to expressing support for the UN SYG and his Mission of Good Offices, reinforcing our firm support for a Cyprus settlement in the generic (rather than the Annan Plan in the specific), and the importance of the Cypriots themselves taking ownership of the settlement process. Following delivery of the President's national day message for Cyprus calling for a "comprehensive solution based on the Annan Plan" (reftel), we should re-cast our public message and emphasize our support for a solution to the Cyprus problem under UN auspices. End Summary.

¶2. (C) A year-and-a-half after the referenda, our public support for the Annan Plan as the specific basis for a Cyprus settlement is undercutting our efforts to get the parties back to the negotiating table. The Greek Cypriot leadership has instrumentalized our public message to reinforce its own credentials in defending Greek Cypriot interests from the predations of foreign Turko-philes. President Papadopoulos and his allies are making similar political hay from our call for the Greek Cypriot side to articulate its concerns "with clarity and finality." This language is no longer serving our interests and we should consider how best to re-frame our public message.

¶3. (C) The Greek Cypriot leadership and conservative commentators have poisoned the well with respect to the Annan Plan so effectively that any effort to defend the specifics of the plan is easily dismissed as part of an Anglo-American conspiracy to reward Turkey and punish Greek Cypriots. President Papadopoulos uses U.S. support for the Annan Plan -- and in particular any language suggesting the plan is "uniquely balanced" -- as a foil for his own (as he would have the public see it) stout defense of Cypriot Hellenism. Our advocacy efforts on behalf of the Annan Plan in the specific, as opposed to a Cyprus settlement in the generic, is feeding the forces of reactionary conservatism on the Greek Cypriot side who see political advantage in castigating the plan as a sell-out of Greek Cypriot interests. The debate over whether the Annan Plan is "a basis for negotiations," "a basis for a solution," "a point of

reference," or "a point of departure" is sterile and unproductive. We do not want to fight over this ground. The simple fact is that there will need to be meaningful changes to the UN settlement plan if it is to be made acceptable to the Greek Cypriot side. We do ourselves no service by pretending this isn't so.

¶4. (C) Similarly, the Greek Cypriot leadership is arguing that it has met the SYG's call for "clarity and finality" in the Greek Cypriot position. Papadopoulos has argued effectively (at least in his own domestic context) that the Tzionis mission to New York last May checked this box and those who argue otherwise are simply carrying water for Ankara. This line plays very well with the Greek Cypriot public.

¶5. (C) Post recommends that we adjust our public rhetoric to take these realities into account. We should continue to express our unwavering support for the SYG and his Mission of Good Offices. The Cyprus issue should remain where it belongs, firmly lodged in a UN context, rather than migrating to the EU agenda. Other core elements of our public message should include:

-- The United States remains firmly committed to a Cyprus settlement and we will work with all concerned parties in pursuit of that goal;

-- Ultimately, it is not the United States, the UN or the EU that will produce a Cyprus settlement. The initiative and the ideas have to come from the Cypriots themselves. We stand ready to support the parties in this process.

¶6. (C) Meanwhile, in our public discourse we should de-emphasize our support for the Annan Plan specifically and steer clear of language putting the onus on the Greek Cypriot side to present changes. It is true that there is nothing inherent in the Annan Plan that necessitated a Greek Cypriot "no" in April 2004. The rejection of the plan was a function of deliberate choices on the part of the Greek Cypriot leadership. Even so, there is no utility in revisiting this debate. Equally, it is true that the Greek Cypriots have not presented positions to the UN that could reasonably be considered to represent "clarity and finality" in their thinking. Neither, however, is it in our interest to pick this fight with the Greek Cypriot side. For the time being, a minimalist message better serves our purpose.

¶7. (C) The President's national day message for Cyprus (reftel) stresses U.S. support for a "just, lasting and comprehensive solution in Cyprus based on the Annan Plan." Post recommends that this message be the last public endorsement of the Annan Plan as a seemingly exclusive option for a settlement. Our message should simply stress U.S. support for a "just, lasting and comprehensive solution in Cyprus." This is something everyone can agree to. The final clause specific to the Annan Plan represents -- in a Greek Cypriot context -- fighting words.

ZIMMERMAN